

Innovation Schools: Six Steps to Approval

1. The applicant prepares a prospectus and submits it to the superintendent.

The prospectus must include, but is not limited to, a description of:

- (i) whether the school will be a new school or a conversion of an existing school;
- (ii) if the school is a new school, the proposed location of the school;
- (iii) if the school is a conversion of an existing school, the school that is being proposed for conversion;
- (iv) the external partners, if any, that will be involved in the school;
- (v) the number of students the school is anticipated to serve and the number of staff expected to be employed at the school;
- (vi) the overall vision for the school, including improving school performance and student achievement;
- (vii) specific needs or challenges the school will be designed to address;
- (viii) a preliminary assessment of the autonomy and flexibility under subsection (b) that the school will seek;
- (ix) why the flexibility described under (viii) (above) is desirable to carry out the objectives of the school;
- (x) anticipated components of the school's innovation plan;
- (xi) a preliminary description of the process that will be used to involve appropriate stakeholders in the development of the innovation plan; and
- (xii) a proposed timetable for development and establishment of the proposed school.

2. Within 30 days of receiving the prospectus, the superintendent convenes a screening committee, which includes: (i) the superintendent or his designee; (ii) a school committee member or a designee selected by the school committee; and (iii) a representative of leadership from the local teachers' union.

The screening committee will review the prospectus for the purpose of determining whether the prospectus: (i) presents a sound and coherent plan for improving school performance and student achievement; (ii) supports or enhances existing educational efforts in the district; and (iii) reasonably can be expanded into a comprehensive innovation plan. In the case of a new school, the committee will prepare an impact statement describing how the school will affect the students and educators in the district.

Within 30 days of receiving the prospectus, the screening committee will decide, on the basis of a 2/3 vote, to accept or reject the prospectus, or return the prospectus to the eligible applicant for revisions.

If a prospectus is rejected or returned, the screening committee will submit a detailed explanation for the decision to the applicant. A prospectus that is rejected or returned may be revised and

resubmitted for subsequent consideration.

3. Within 30 days of screening committee approval, the applicant creates the innovation plan committee, on which there can be no more than 11 members.

The innovation plan committee must include, but is not limited to, the following individuals:

- (i) the applicant;
- (ii) the superintendent or a designee;
- (iii) a school committee member or a designee;
- (iv) a parent who has 1 or more children enrolled in the school – in the case of a new school, a parent who has 1 or more children in the district (the applicant will select the parent from among nominees submitted by parent-teacher organizations in the district, but if the district does not contain a parent-teacher organization or if the organization does not submit nominees, the applicant selects the parent from among volunteers in the area or community the proposed school is expected to serve);
- (v) a principal employed by the district (from among volunteers in the district); and
- (vi) 2 teachers employed by the district (1 of whom is selected from nominees submitted by the local teacher's union).

The purpose of the innovation plan committee is to: (i) develop the innovation plan; (ii) assure that appropriate stakeholders are represented in the development of the proposed Innovation School; and (iii) provide meaningful opportunities for the stakeholders to contribute to the development of the school.

4. The innovation plan committee develops and approves the innovation plan.

The purpose of the innovation plan is to comprehensively articulate the areas of autonomy and flexibility that the proposed school will use.

The innovation plan must include, but is not limited to:

- (i) a curriculum plan, which includes a detailed description of the curriculum and related programs for the proposed school and how the curriculum is expected to improve school performance and student achievement;
- (ii) a budget plan, which includes a detailed description of how funds will be used differently in the proposed school to support school performance and student achievement;
- (iii) a school schedule plan, which includes a detailed description of the ways, if any, the program or calendar of the proposed school will be enhanced or expanded;
- (iv) a staffing plan, which includes a detailed description of how the school principal, administrators, faculty and staff will be recruited, employed, evaluated and compensated in the proposed school and any proposed waivers or modifications of collective bargaining agreements;
- (v) a policy and procedures plan, which includes a detailed description of the unique operational policies and procedures to be used by the proposed school and how the procedures will support school performance and student achievement; and

- (vi) a professional development plan, which includes a detailed description of how the school and other partners will provide high-quality professional development to its administrators, teachers and staff.

In order to assess the proposed school across multiple measures of school performance and student success, the innovation plan must also include measurable annual goals including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) student attendance;
- (ii) student safety and discipline;
- (iii) student promotion and graduation and dropout rates;
- (iv) student achievement on the MCAS;
- (v) progress in areas of academic underperformance;
- (vi) progress among subgroups of students, including low-income students as defined by chapter 70, limited English-proficient students and students receiving special education; and
- (vii) reduction of achievement gaps among different groups of students.

A majority of the members of the innovation plan committee must approve the innovation plan in order to proceed.

5. Teachers review and approve the innovation plan for a conversion school, or local stakeholders negotiate proposed waivers from or modifications to the collective bargaining agreement (if applicable) for a new school.

- a. In the case of a conversion school, the applicant must submit the innovation plan to current teachers in the school for approval (by secret ballot) within 30 days of completing the innovation plan.

Approval by two-thirds of the current teachers is required to accept the innovation plan. The provisions of the collective bargaining agreements applicable to the administrators, teachers, and staff in the school will be considered to be in operation at an Innovation School unless waivers or modifications in the innovation plan are approved. Upon approval, the innovation plan must be submitted to the school committee within seven days for review.

If a two-thirds vote is not achieved, the innovation plan committee may revise the innovation plan as necessary and submit the revised plan to the current teachers for a subsequent vote.

- b. In the case of a new school, the applicant, local union and superintendent are required to negotiate waivers or modifications to the applicable collective bargaining agreement that are necessary for the school to implement the innovation plan.

After the negotiations have been completed, the innovation plan will be submitted immediately to the school committee for review.

If the negotiations have not resulted in an agreement within 40 days, any of the parties can petition the Division of Labor Relations for the selection of an arbitrator. The Division will select an arbitrator within 3 days of the petition from a list submitted by the parties, who will conduct a hearing within 14 days of the arbitrator's selection. Within 14 days of the close of the hearing, the arbitrator will submit a decision which will be final and binding for all parties.

6. The school committee reviews the innovation plan and votes to authorize the establishment of the Innovation School.

After receiving an innovation plan, the school committee is required to hold at least 1 public hearing. After the hearing, but not later than 60 days after the receipt of the innovation plan, the school committee votes to authorize the Innovation School for a period of up to 5 years. Approval of the majority of the school committee as fully constituted is required to authorize an Innovation School.

If school committee approval is not obtained, an innovation plan committee may revise the innovation plan and:

- (i) in the case of a new school, submit the revised plan to the school committee for a subsequent vote; or
- (ii) in the case of a conversion, submit the revised plan to the teachers in the school that is proposed for conversion for a vote, and then follow the procedures above.

The school committee is required to vote on the revised plan within 60 days of receipt.